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THE CHIEF OF STAFF
AT THE OPERATIONAL LEVEL -- TAILORED
FOR EXCELLENCE OR
BOUGHT OFF THE RACK?

A Monograph

by

Major French L. MacLean

Infantry



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School of Advanced Military Studies
United States Army Command and General Staff College
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

Second Term 88-89

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AD-A215 584

UNCLASSIFIED

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
1a. REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION UNCLASSIFIED			1b. RESTRICTIVE MARKINGS		
2a. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION AUTHORITY			3. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF REPORT approved for public release; distribution unlimited		
2b. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE			4. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)		
4. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)			5. MONITORING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)		
6a. NAME OF PERFORMING ORGANIZATION School of Advanced Military Studies, USACGSC		6b. OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable) ATZL-SWV	7a. NAME OF MONITORING ORGANIZATION		
6c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) Fort Leavenworth, Kansas 66027-6900			7b. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)		
8a. NAME OF FUNDING/SPONSORING ORGANIZATION		8b. OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable)	9. PROCUREMENT INSTRUMENT IDENTIFICATION NUMBER		
8c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)			10. SOURCE OF FUNDING NUMBERS		
			PROGRAM ELEMENT NO.	PROJECT NO.	TASK NO.
			WORK UNIT ACCESSION NO.		
11. TITLE (Include Security Classification) The Chief of Staff at the Operational Level -- Tailored for Excellence or Bought Off the Rack? (U)					
12. PERSONAL AUTHOR(S) Major French L. MacLean, USA					
13a. TYPE OF REPORT Monograph		13b. TIME COVERED FROM _____ TO _____		14. DATE OF REPORT (Year, Month, Day) 89/05/17	
				15. PAGE COUNT 50	
16. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTATION					
17. COSATI CODES			18. SUBJECT TERMS (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)		
FIELD	GROUP	SUB-GROUP			
			Leadership German Army Groups		
			German Generals in WWII Operational Chiefs of Staff		
19. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)					
<p>This monograph discusses the role of the chief of staff at the operational level by examining both the current U.S. Armed Forces and the German General Staff system in World War II. The position of chief of staff at operational levels is a key to success and affects both command and control and morale in large unit operations. The monograph hypothesizes that current U.S. doctrine, officer education, and chief of staff selection and training may be inadequate in preparing officers for this position. (continued on other side of form)</p>					
20. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF ABSTRACT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNCLASSIFIED/UNLIMITED <input type="checkbox"/> SAME AS RPT <input type="checkbox"/> DTIC USERS			21. ABSTRACT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION UNCLASSIFIED		
22a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL Major French L. MacLean			22b. TELEPHONE (Include Area Code) (913) 684-2138		22c. OFFICE SYMBOL ATZL-SWV

Block #19 (continued)

The monograph first examines current U.S. doctrine concerning the role of the chief of staff. This doctrine is found to be inadequate as it does not give the operational chief of staff the required authority or adequately define the operational actions that this individual must formulate and supervise in the anticipated operational level of war. The monograph then indicates that commanders and CINCs must be given significant input in selecting their own chiefs of staff. Officer education, training and advancement is then examined and found to be too oriented to "command track" performance, with too little emphasis on preparing officers for chief of staff assignments.

The monograph then analyzes the World War II German General Staff and German Army chiefs of staff at army group level. The monograph examines German General Staff selection, education, promotion, selection, and training; all of which were designed to produce competent high level commanders and staff officers. This overview includes selection procedures for the Kriegsakademie, the relative age and seniority of army group chiefs of staff, General Staff service, branch affiliations, previous command and staff experience, specialized senior leader training courses, chief of staff tour lengths, and chief of staff selection input from commanders.

Finally, the monograph suggests that the current U.S. system can benefit by the German experience by expanding the role of the chief of staff in doctrine, and permitting commanders and CINCs to have considerable influence in selecting their own chiefs. The basic U.S. officer education system is found to be a good base for future fine tuning to provide better development of future chiefs of staff. Last, the monograph questions the utility of the "command track" officer development system which produces excellent commanders, but perhaps does not tailor senior officers for operational level staff assignments.

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17 May 1989

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SCHOOL OF ADVANCED MILITARY STUDIES

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Title of Monograph: The Chief of Staff at the Operational Level --
Tailored for Excellence or Bought Off the Rack?

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Accepted this 15th day of May 1989

ABSTRACT

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by Major French L. MacLean, USA

This monograph discusses the role of the chief of staff at the operational level by examining both the current U.S. Armed Forces and the German General Staff system in World War II. The position of chief of staff at operational levels is a key to success and affects both command and control and morale in large unit operations. The monograph hypothesizes that current U.S. doctrine, officer education, and chief of staff selection and training may be inadequate in preparing officers for this position.

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Section I

INTRODUCTION

The Armed Forces education system doesn't train individuals to be chiefs of staff. I had to assimilate my knowledge from 'a crusty old colonel'." (a current chief of staff of a unified command) [1]

Military organizations seem to become more complex along the twisting trail of military history. However, unity of command, often embodied by the commander and chief of staff relationship, seems to be a consistent key to success at the operational level of war. Within this context, unity of command is defined as "the direction and coordination of the action of all forces toward a common goal or objective." [2] To achieve this unity, superior generals have historically selected staff officers, to include chiefs of staff, who complement them by compensating for the commanders' "blind spots". [3]

One of the best examples of a harmonious commander/chief of staff team was that of Prussian Field Marshal Gebhard von Bluecher and his chief of staff Colonel August von Gneisenau.

Bluecher, who recognized his own shortcomings and the genius of his chief of staff, relied implicitly on Gneisenau's judgement. [4]

A more recent, but just as illuminating example, concerns the relationship of Field Marshal Montgomery and his chief Brigadier Sir

Francis "Freddie" de Guingand. Montgomery stated the importance of a commander and his chief being compatible but not exactly the same. De Guingand had known Montgomery for several years, was implicitly trusted, was capable of working at high speed, was a detailed planner, and knew Montgomery and his ways. [5] Together they made a formidable team.

Conversely, many acclaimed generals have failed when stripped of their "right-hand men". De Guingand was not present with Montgomery for the planning and execution of the disastrous Dieppe Raid in 1942. An even larger failure perhaps was caused in part by the absence of chief of staff General Berthier from Napoleon's side at Waterloo. [6]

The U.S. Armed Forces record in integrating the commander and chief of staff is not brilliant. General George C. Marshall observed that many American staffs: [7]

Tended to excess in emulating and reinforcing the commander.

Tended to be very conservative.

Tended to be obsessive about centralizing and routinizing business.

Given the historical importance of this commander/chief of staff relationship, what should be the education, training, and experience of our own individuals for the positions of chiefs of staff at the

operational level in the U.S. Armed Forces? The purpose of this monograph is to answer these questions, examine a historically successful staff system in the German General Staff, and propose changes to our own system to ensure that the commander/ chief of staff relationship at our own operational level approaches the same plateau of success as many in the past. To begin to answer these questions we must first examine current U.S. doctrine. Does this doctrine give the operational chief of staff the required authority? Does this doctrine prescribe the character needed at this level of responsibility? Finally, does this doctrine lay out the operational actions that this individual must formulate and supervise? The answers to these three questions will indicate if the stated role of the chief of staff is adequate for anticipated operational requirements.

DOCTRINE

Current doctrine concerning the functions and responsibilities of the chief of staff at the operational level is nebulous. The Armed Forces Staff College Pub 1 The Joint Staff Officer's Guide 1988 prescribes an almost solely bureaucratic function for the chief and his staff. It states: [8]

A properly functioning staff supports the commander by:

- * Learning the commander's policies and working within them.
- * Keeping the commander informed of pertinent information.
- * Developing basic decisions into adequate plans.
- * Anticipating future needs and drafting tentative plans to meet them.
- * Translating plans into orders and transmitting them to major subordinate commands.
- * Ensuring compliance with orders through observation/inspection.
- * Supplementing the commander's efforts to secure unity of action throughout the command.

This work goes on to state that a chief of staff on a joint staff serves as the principal staff officer, who directs and coordinates the work of all staff divisions. [9] These are adequate guidelines for the organization of the office but should be expanded to include wartime operational requirements.

U.S Army doctrine should also be expanded concerning the role of the chief of staff. The following chief of staff guidelines from various army sources further represent the "office function" approach:

[10]

The chief of staff is responsible for directing the execution of staff tasks, the coordinated effort of staff members, and the efficient and prompt response of the staff. The chief of staff directs the efforts of both the coordinating and special staffs. (FM 101-5, Staff Organizations and Operations)

The chief of staff--

Formulates and announces staff operating policies.

Insures that the commander and staff are informed on matters affecting the command.

Maintains the master policy file and monitors the command operating procedures.

(RB 101-5, Staff Organization and Operations)

Richard F. Vaughn, author of Staff Control and the Chief of Staff's Challenge in an Operational Level Headquarters, has reviewed many publications concerning the chief of staff's responsibilities and categorizes both the 1972 and 1984 editions of FM 101-5 as ambiguous in describing joint and combined staff organizations, the chief of staff's duties, and the level of his authority. [11]

Vaughn goes on to state that this previous institutionalized authority to command and control the staff has been far too

restrictive and that a new permissive approach to the chief of staff's authority and duties is needed. To achieve this new level of authority he recommends the following: [12]

The chief of staff must regulate staff operations within the command in accordance with regulations.

The chief of staff should represent the commander or commander in chief (CINC) in his absence or in the absence of the deputy, with authority to make decisions except in the most critical areas.

The chief of staff should serve as the normal channel by which staff elements communicate with the command group.

The chief of staff should exercise general supervision of staff planning and of operations in the field or afloat.

The chief of staff should direct the operations of the primary command center.

The chief of staff should inform the commander, or CINC, of the situation and of staff recommendations, translate the commander's, or CINC's decision into staff and command guidance; and alert the command, issuing preparation orders in the commander's, or CINC's, name.

Because current doctrine is inadequate concerning staff alignment and the authority of the chief of staff, Vaughn contends that the relative freedom of action of chiefs of staff at the operational level varies. [13] A modification to doctrine, similar to these recommendations would give the operational chief of staff the authority required. With this increase in authority, what does doctrine state concerning the character traits required at the operational command/chief of staff level?

Gregory C. Gardner, author of Generalship in War: The Principles of Operational Command, examines required character traits in operational level leaders in much the same way as Vaughn does required authority. He concludes that U.S. Army leadership doctrine is "unacceptably vague" in discussing leadership of large formations in war. [14] He gives three reasons for this inadequacy: failure to delineate the manner in which leadership requirements change at higher levels, failure to distinguish between leadership in peace versus war, and failure to address the realities of personality and situation in leadership -- concentrating solely on what we want our leaders to be. [15]

Gardner proposes some doctrinal improvements. Although he specifically addresses the commander, his recommendations can also be applied to the chief of staff. Gardner states: [16]

The successful operational commander must:

- * Have the vision to see the endstate of a campaign.
- * Display moral courage and intellectual acumen.
- * Know the technical capabilities of his forces' equipment.
- * Appreciate the logistical aspects of operations.
- * Have an understanding of human nature.
- * Have a good sense for tactical and operational terrain.
- * Be a persuasive communicator.

* Be physically and mentally strong.

* Have the ability to coordinate air, land, and naval forces to achieve operational ends.

These character traits should be considered for future iterations of Army leadership manuals, as they are equally as important as the degree of authority this "new" operational level chief of staff should have. But doctrine will still remain incomplete without a look at the operational level of war itself. This third component of doctrine should describe the operational actions the commander and chief of staff must formulate and supervise.

Fortunately much thought has gone into this component. Major General Gordon R. Sullivan recently tackled this problem in his article "Learning to Decide at the Operational Level of War". MG Sullivan distilled that the most important problems associated with large scale combined forces were conceptual ones; those that concerned the integration of large scale land and air forces toward a common campaign objective. These concepts, he continued, were difficult to derive as operational level U.S. forces usually exist only in wartime, or as smaller peacetime organizations; and that large scale operational-level exercises have been extremely expensive to conduct. [17]

Using a background of theory and history MG Sullivan states that senior [operational level] commanders and staffs must be able to: [18]

- * Orchestrate tactical actions (division and below) from an operational perspective to achieve the overall campaign goals specified at the operational level.
- * Prepare alternatives (branches of doctrine) and sequels to the main effort of the campaign plan.
- * Conduct long-term, extended-range intelligence collection operations and evaluate the situation theater-wide for its operational implications.
- * Confront the enemy at the operational level of decision making so as to defeat his operational art at work.
- * Orchestrate operational-level maneuver during the course of a campaign.
- * Create operational reserves and employ them to gain the decisive objectives of the campaign or its current phase.
- * Properly mass fires at operational depths in support of the overall campaign objectives.
- * Make operational-level decisions to keep the campaign at a high tempo to achieve operationally decisive objectives.
- * Anticipate the time and place that culminating points [sic] will occur; assure that friendly forces will be secure at such times and attempt to overextend the enemy early and strike him while he is vulnerable. (This requirement more correctly refers to operational pauses, not culminating points, ed. note)

These nine operational functions should be integrated with the previous two examinations of leadership to define the requirements for successful operational commanders and chiefs of staff in future doctrine. With this "end state" defined, we can now examine current selection, training, and educational programs for these individuals.

SELECTION, TRAINING, and EDUCATION

The U.S Army does not have a complete mechanism for selecting, training, and educating officers to meet the anticipated requirements for operational level chiefs of staff.

During World War II U.S. operational commanders had significant input concerning the selection of their chiefs of staff. General Omar Bradley selected General William B. Kean to serve as his chief of staff both in the 28th Infantry Division and the II Corps. Bradley later picked General Lev Allen to serve as his 1st Army Group chief of staff. Later, when Bradley assumed command of the 12th Army Group the efficient and amiable Allen went with him to be chief again. [19]

Since then however, the commander has lost much of this prerogative. Some of this limitation is caused by the required organizations of joint staffs while other constraints are imposed by the Army personnel system. Major Vaughn states that the primary requirement for the chief of staff is that he must complement the commander. [20] Major John M. Vermillion, author of The Main Pillars of Generalship: A Different View, concurs and believes the Army should modify the personnel system to permit senior commanders to select their own chiefs of staff. [21] With the many historical examples in

support, it would seem as though this crucial element of selection should be adopted.

The education system also needs fine tuning. The Command and General Staff College (CGSC) is the senior tactical school of the Army. It has proponency for FM 100-5, Operations and FM 100-6, Large Unit Operations. Michael D. Heredia, author of First Contact: Peacetime Planning Versus the Realities of Combat, the Need for an Operational Mechanism, has concluded that CGSC is not staffed to collect, analyze, or instruct operational lessons from the field. [22] Major General Gordon Sullivan adds that these operational lessons are hard to obtain as operational level U.S. forces usually exist only in wartime or as smaller peacetime cadre, and that large scale operational-level exercises are extremely expensive to conduct. [23] The U.S. Army War College focuses on the linkage of national strategy and military policy. As such, it concentrates on the reevaluation of U.S. joint doctrine, rather than analyzing operational art. [24]

Selection for attendance at both CGSC and the War College is subjective in nature, with no true entrance examinations. Selection boards must base their decisions primarily on officer personnel files. Additionally, branch and alternate specialty requirements influence selections.

The School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS) does provide an operational curriculum for selected students. Graduates of the

program, approximately fifty per year, are sent to division and corps staffs for service, with the hope that many will later serve at joint headquarters. Students at CGSC who have a desire to attend SAMS take an examination and undergo an interview. A board of officers then rank orders the applicants. This list is then approved by TAPA and the students admitted to the program. The officers' personnel files are not viewed by the Fort Leavenworth selection committee.

An additional area of interest concerns joint education requirements. The Armed Forces Staff College (AFSC) is transitioning into a short-term joint qualification institution. SAMS does not bestow the "joint qualified" certificate. The integration of CGSC, SAMS, and the AFSC new course must be accomplished if we are to implement the desired education for future operational chiefs of staff.

Several initiatives have been implemented to train and improve operational decision making. The Warrior Preparation Center uses computer technology to develop "laboratories of war". The Determined Warrior series of exercises emphasize senior commanders and staff actions in making operational decisions. Finally, there is an increased level of study of Soviet operational art. [25]

One problem still exists. The current career progression for successful officers is too crowded with "command track" requirements

to permit adequate development of chiefs of staff. As a major an officer must spend one to two years as an operations officer or executive officer at a battalion in addition to one or two years of professional education. Although these assignments may additionally be good preparation for higher level staff positions, currently they are almost "requirements" for selection to battalion command. As a lieutenant colonel the officer must be selected as a battalion commander and serve two to two and a half years in this position. Lack of command at this level seriously limits an individual's opportunity to attend the War College, or be promoted more than one additional grade. These command requirements continue with brigade command.

Is our system of selecting, educating, and training officers adequately developing individuals for operational level chiefs of staff? Many current chiefs say "no". [26] Historical example shows that a separate career pattern of selection, education, and training may provide a solution to this problem. Section II will examine one of the most successful of these systems -- the German General Staff in World War II.

Section II

INTRODUCTION

It would be dangerous for the United States to continue blithely to ignore the German General Staff when, for more than a century, it represented and demonstrated institutionalized military genius. (COL [Ret] Trevor N. Dupuy) [27]

The purpose of this section will be to examine the background, education, and experience factors of German army group chiefs of staff in World War II, and the system which tailored them for this operational experience. A total of 41 men served as permanent or acting chiefs of staff of the army groups from 1939 to 1945.

These men served at the highest levels of an officer corps unique in history. One of the "patron saints" of the 20th Century German Army was former Chief of Staff Helmut von Moltke. [28] Von Moltke considered officership an elite function derived more from an individual's character rather than intellect. Character was seen as the ability for an individual to make a difficult decision, often under pressure, and then stick with this decision and follow through with its execution. Such character could not truly be developed in an individual. Rather, the officer possessing this trait would be recognized and be deliberately pushed upward to positions of greater responsibility. [29] The mechanism for finding men with character was the General Staff system.

GENERAL STAFF SERVICE

Prussian and German institutionalization of military genius, the General Staff, was a summation of selection, examination, specialized training. These three cornerstones emphasized historical study, inculcation of the initiative, responsibility, objectivity in analysis, and tactical-technical proficiency. [30]

The German General Staff Corps was a group of specially selected, trained, and educated officers. Their mission was to serve as a control mechanism to assist the commander in directing large military units. This included planning, coordinating, supervising, and assuring operational readiness. [31]

Candidates for the General Staff were selected based on "character, disposition, physical, and intellectual abilities". [32] Membership was always select. After World War I all lieutenants with nine to ten years service were required to take the Military District Examination as the first step in a long selection process. The test lasted several days and included a timed written test, oral exam, wargames, map exercises, and tactical walks. Subjects tested comprised tactics, military history, weapons, a foreign language, and physical fitness. Tactical questions were often in essay form with no school solution. The examiners instead, were concerned with the consistency,

sound judgement, and practicality of the answers. Additionally, the examining officers were searching for officers demonstrating character and imagination. [33]

About 1000 officers passed the Military District examination each year. Of these, 80 to 90 would be selected by the chain of command for the Kriegsakademie course in their Military District. This course consisted of two years instruction at the district with a third year in Berlin. Students were dropped from the course at the end of each year, with 40 to 45 remaining at the conclusion of the Berlin phase. These select few would be detailed to the General Staff to serve in a one year probationary program. Once again a winnowing process depleted the ranks. At the end of this year 15 to 20 would receive permanent transfers to the General Staff. [34]

This severe process still provided a leavening effect throughout the entire army. Those officers who went to some General Staff training, but who were not selected for General Staff positions had still been exposed to much specialized training. Additionally, there was no penalty for these "partially qualified" individuals. There is no evidence that their unsuccessful bids to become General Staff officers hurt them later their careers. They had attempted a difficult task and their performance exceeded that of many officers who did not enter the program. [35]

The Kriegsakademie was the sole professional college in the German Army. Its purpose was to educate and produce General Staff officers. Normally students were captains who were promoted to major shortly after graduation -- about two years ahead of their peers who did not attend. Prior to 1934 the Kriegsakademie was three years long. This was reduced to two years after this date due to the expansion of the Army and the ensuing need for more General Staff officers. [36]

Instructors for the Kriegsakademie were carefully selected. Chief instructors for tactics and military history were personally selected by the Chief of the Army General Staff. Division commander recommendations and the results of the annual "instructor selection tour" weighed heavily in the selection of all instructors. This tour was a combination of wargame and terrain discussion lasting several days. Participants included the Chief of the Army General Staff, several of his subordinates, and Kriegsakademie instructor candidates, all of whom would travel on an extended motor trip or horseback ride. The Chief would pose hypothetical tactical problems at several stops, often along the borders of Germany where the Army might eventually fight. The candidates were expected to provide an estimate of the situation and an oral mission order rapidly. The tour resulted in not only an excellent selection of instructors, but also provided the future Kriegsakademie staff with a first-hand knowledge of how the chief of staff and his generals thought -- an inside look at the commander's intent. [37]

The curriculum at the Kriegsakademie was also rigorous. The study of tactics and military history dominated the course of instruction. Tactics was a broad field whose essence concerned the art of leading troops. Other subjects included operational leadership, air support, logistics, and communications. Additionally, there were numerous terrain exercises. The goal of this instruction was to produce a highly competent general staff officer, not a specialized one. Colonel Fritz Berendsen served as a chief instructor at the Kriegsakademie and provides this insight: [38]

A General Staff officer in the true sense of the word, not a special staff officer, was to be educated. Great emphasis was placed upon developing capabilities for creative thought and action. Not routine bureaucrats, but experts with unique mastery were to be educated, or rather discovered.

Upon graduation, the officer began a long career of important positions in the German Army. The concept of the General Staff was to rotate officers between selected staff positions and command of troops. Command positions included battalion, regiment, division, and higher, although command at each level was not considered mandatory for advancement. In the staff arena, two General Staff positions were considered extremely important: operations officer (Ia) of a division and chief of staff at a corps or higher level.

Division operations officers were normally the rank of major. In addition to his duties in operations he also served as the chief of staff as the division structure did not allocate a separate position for one. The division supply officer (Ib) and the division intelligence officer (Ic) were subordinated to him. [39]

Chiefs of staff had much more prestige and authority than other officers of equal rank. [40] Colonels and lieutenant colonels served as corps chiefs of staff, while army chiefs of staff were usually colonels or major-generals. Responsibilities for the corps chief of staff were initially laid out in the Prussian Army in 1814 and formalized in 1865 in a royal order which included [41]

"When I have given no special instructions filling the post of a general commanding during his temporary absence, the chief of the General Staff will transact the current duties of the general..."

This quotation is in part a reflection of the Prussian/German concept of Co-responsibility, which is not found in most other armies. Under this tenet, the commander and chief of staff shared responsibility for command decisions. The chief of staff had the combined duties of the United States system of executive officer/assistant commander and the operations officer. The commander's decision on these matters was final, but the chief of staff was obligated to go on record through the General Staff chain of communications protesting decisions the chief felt to be misguided.

Chiefs of staff who had not gone on record with such a protest were held co-responsible with the commander for an ensuing failure. This system did not cause friction between the two positions, but rather caused commanders and chiefs of staff to have smooth working relationships based on trust and confidence. In application as the commander was passing orders to subordinate commanders, the chief of staff was amplifying intentions to the junior chiefs of staff. As the operations unfolded, the junior chiefs of staff were conversely able to inform the senior chief of both opportunities and difficulties in execution. Hitler, ever wary of the professional officer corps, discarded this principle in 1939. [42]

With this understanding of the German General Staff system, the monograph can now begin to analyze the characteristics of the chiefs of staff of the army groups in the World War II German Army.

BACKGROUND

AGE

The first characteristic to be examined is age. Major General J.F.C. Fuller in his work Generalship Its Diseases and Their Cure: A Study of the Personal Factor in Command states that physical vigor and energy are important assets of generalship and are usually found in

younger men. [43] This was true of the army group chiefs of staff. A review of age indicates the average age of army group chiefs of staff to be 45. The following information shows the age groups as defined by age upon assuming the position of army group chief of staff:

Table 1

Age of German World War II Army Group Chiefs of Staff [44]

Age	Number of Officers	Percentage of Total
35 to 39	5	12.2
40 to 44	12	29.3
45 to 49	17	41.5
50 to 55	6	14.7
55 to 59	1	2.4

This information takes on additional relevance when compared to the ages of army group commanders and corps commanders. The average age of the army group commanders was 56, some 11 years older than their chiefs. The following two tables show the ages of both levels of commanders:

Table 2

Age of German World War II Army Group Commanders [45]

Age	Number of Officers	Percentage of Total
40 to 44	1	2.8
45 to 49	1	2.8
50 to 54	9	25.7
55 to 59	15	42.9
60 to 64	9	25.7

Table 3

Age of German World War II Corps Commanders [46]

Age	Number of Officers*	Percentage of Total
40 to 44	6	1.8
45 to 50	107	31.8
51 to 55	165	49.0
56 to 60	45	13.4
61 to 65	11	3.3

* Note: Ages were determined for 334 of 337 corps commanders.

The fact that the army group chiefs of staff were much younger than their army group commanders and even corps commanders did not prove to be a problem. Both superior and subordinate based the relationship on ability not age.

GRADE

The German Army did not promote officers simply to match the assigned and authorized grade required. This policy applied to the General Staff as well as line officers. In practice army group chiefs of staff held the grade of Oberst (Colonel), Generalmajor (Brigadier General), Generalleutnant (Major General), and General der Infanterie (Lieutenant General). Once again, the difference in grade between the chief of staff and both superior and subordinate commanders did not adversely affect the professional relationship. The following table shows this distribution:

Table 4
Grade Structure of German World War II
Army Group Chiefs of Staff [47]

Grade	Number of Officers	Percentage of Total
Oberst	4	9.8
Generalmajor	17	41.5
Generalleutnant	19	46.3
General der Infanterie	1	2.4

GENERAL STAFF SERVICE

As might be expected the vast majority, 39 of 41 (95.1%) army group chiefs of staff were General Staff officers. The two who were not were both Waffen SS officers. SS-Gruppenfuehrer (Major General) Werner Ostendorff was chief of staff for Army Group Upper Rhine from December 1944 to January 1945. SS - Gruppenfuehrer Heinz Lammerding served as chief of staff for Army Group Vistula from January to March 1945. Ostendorff and Lammerding had held previous staff assignments usually reserved for General Staff officers and probably were able to assimilate some General Staff procedures and techniques. Both army groups were commanded by Waffen SS officers during this period -- a factor in their selection to chiefs of staff. [48]

BRANCH AFFILIATION

Although the General Staff was considered a branch for officers, the chiefs of staff originally came from many different branches. Most (65.9%) had been infantry officers. Additionally, at the beginning of their careers all prospective officers had attended the infantry school as it was expected that all officers understand the infantry they would support. [49] Table 5 shows that almost all army group chiefs of staff came from the combat arms:

Table 5
Branch Affiliation of German World War II
Army Group Chiefs of Staff [50]

Branch	Number of Officers	Percentage of Total
Infantry	27	65.9
Artillery	4	9.8
Cavalry	6	14.6
Engineer	3	7.3
Signal	1	2.4
General Staff	39	95.1

The branch affiliation of the army group commanders closely parallels these results. Both commanders and chiefs of staff had heavy combat arms backgrounds.

Table 6
Branch Affiliation of German World War II
Army Group Commanders [51]

Branch	Number of Commanders	Percentage of Total
Infantry	21	60.0
Artillery	6	17.1

Branch Affiliation of German World War II

Army Group Commanders (continued)

Branch	Number of Commanders	Percentage of Total
Cavalry	2	5.7
Engineer	1	2.9
Signal	0	0.0
Luftwaffe	3	8.6
Waffen SS	1	2.9

PREVIOUS STAFF EXPERIENCE

Most army group chiefs of staff had served in previous General Staff positions. Twenty-seven (65.9%) had been division operations officers (Ia). Twenty-six (63.4%) had been corps chiefs of staff. Thirty-two (78.0%) had been army chiefs of staff. All three positions proved excellent stepping stones to army group level chief of staff positions. Additionally, many officers had held multiple assignments both in the peacetime Reichswehr and during the war as shown:

Table 7
Previous General Staff Experience for German World
War II Army Group Chiefs of Staff [52]

Position	Number of Chiefs	Percentage of Total
Division Operations Officer (Ia)	27	65.9
Corps Chief of Staff	26	63.4
Army Chief of Staff	32	78.0
Service as both Division Ia and Corps Chief of Staff	15	36.6
Service as both Corps and Army Chief of Staff	20	48.8
Service in all three positions	12	29.3
Service in none of the three	0	0.0

PREVIOUS COMMAND POSITIONS

Although the concept of the General Staff was to rotate officers between selected command and staff positions, a review of the careers of the army group chiefs of staff reveal that many did not sequentially command companies, battalions, and regiments.

Table 8
Previous Command Experience for German World War II
Army Group Chiefs of Staff [53]

Level of Command	Number Chiefs of Staff	Percentage of Total
Battalion only	7	17.1
Regiment only	5	12.2
Battalion and Regiment	0	0.0
Division only	2	4.9
Regiment and Division	1	2.4
Battalion, Regiment, and Division	2	4.9
None of the above	20	48.8
Insufficient data	4	9.8

Post-war interviews do not indicate that this lack of junior command experience was a problem. However, during the war the German High Command recognized the need for a senior leaders' course to assist in preparing division and corps commanders, and corps chiefs of staff, for the modern battlefield. The course, four to six weeks long, included tactical subjects and techniques and procedures for employing assault gun, anti-tank, and armored forces. The instruction was for all incoming commanders, not just those with General Staff backgrounds.

LATER COMMAND POSITIONS

The lack of earlier commands obviously did not affect the selection of General Staff officers for army group chiefs of staff. Neither did it hinder selection to higher commands after their tours as chiefs of staff ended. Almost forty percent commanded later as shown:

Table 9

Later Command Positions for Army Group Chiefs of Staff [54]

Level of Command	Number of Chiefs of Staff	Percentage of Total
Corps	1	2.4
Army	7	17.0
Army Group	4	9.7
Division	2	4.9
Chief of Army General Staff	2	4.9
Not Eligible (War ended during tour as army group chief of staff)	11	26.8
None	14	34.1

Certainly, experience as a chief of staff was an excellent preparation for both army and army group command, although in the

German Army it was not a prerequisite. Four chiefs of staff later commanded army groups, but this represents only 11.4% of all army group commanders. The overall key to smooth officer transition seems to have stemmed from a common orientation of these officers instilled by the General Staff system, rather than a rigid officer progression system.

TOUR LENGTH AND REPEATED CHIEF OF STAFF ASSIGNMENTS

Army group chiefs of staff generally did not remain in these positions for extended periods. The average duration in the position was just over nine months for each man. Almost one-half remained in this position for less than six months. Many individuals did not completely leave the senior staff system. Seven (17.7%) served as chiefs of staff for two different army groups and three (7.3%) served in this capacity for three army groups. The following chart presents the wide range in the durations officers stayed in the position:

Table 10
Army Group Chief of Staff Tour Duration [55]

Number of Months	Number of Chiefs of Staff	Percentage of Total
1 - 6	19	46.4
7 - 12	10	24.4
13 - 18	6	14.6
19 - 24	5	12.2
25 - 30	0	0.0
31 - 36	0	0.0
37 - 42	1	2.4

The causes for shorter tour lengths were not negative. The basic problem was that the army group chiefs of staff were talented individuals who were needed for many different commands and staffs in a personnel system chronically short of senior officers. [56] A glimpse of this talent can be seen in the Officer Efficiency Report System.

OFFICER EFFICIENCY REPORTS

The basis for officer promotions in the German Army was the officer efficiency reporting system. This program had a time honored

tradition, initially established in the Prussian Army by King Frederick Wilhelm I in 1725. [57] Prior to World War II the system called for an annual report for each officer. Based on these reports seven categories were established into which an officer could be classified. The highest two classifications were: (1) Officers suitable for service at the High Command, and (2) Officers suitable for General Staff duty. [58]

General officers were arranged on lists submitted every three months to the Army Personnel Office. The top three categories were: (1) "Born Leaders", (2) Officers who would perform well in the next higher command, and (3) Officers who should be placed temporarily in the next higher command to prove their abilities. [59] The efficiency report provided the most important information in determining appointments and promotions. [60]

The narrative comments on the report furnished valuable insights into the potential of each officer. A promotion list prepared in February 1945 concerning several officers who had been army group chiefs of staff reflects these observations. [61]

General der Panzer Roettiger [Chief of Staff for Army Groups A and C] - "Suitable as a commanding general (corps), later an army commander."

General der Kavallerie Westphal [Chief of Staff for Army Group C] - "Towering personal leader. Great achiever."

Generalleutnant von Gyldenfeldt [Chief of Staff for Army Groups A, F, and G] - "Tactical and operational talent. Clear judgement, sure decisions."

Generalleutnant Foertsch [Chief of Staff for Army Group C] - "Outstanding tactical and operational vision... steady in a crisis."

As reflected by the comments, these individuals represented a high degree of performance often displayed by officers of the German General Staff. [62]

CHIEF OF STAFF SELECTION

Before leaving the army group chiefs of staff it is relevant to examine command prerogative concerning chief of staff selection. There is evidence to indicate that army group commanders had considerable influence in selecting their own chiefs of staff. The wartime diaries of Chief of the Army General Staff Franz Halder list numerous examples of senior commanders requesting specific personnel changes. [63] F.W. von Mellenthin states in his own memoirs that General der Panzertruppe Balck took him from his duties as chief of staff at 4th Panzer Army to become chief of staff at Army Group G in September 1944. [64]

Several other strong connections exist. Generalmajor Foertsch arrived with the new commander Generaloberst Rendulic the same day to assume duties as chief of staff for Army Group C. General der

Infanterie Krebs served as chief of staff for Generalfeldmarschall Model in two different army groups. Both Waffen SS army group chiefs of staff worked for Waffen SS commanders. Finally, Generalleutnant Gause served under Generalfeldmarschall Rommel as chief of staff on two different occasions.

This linkage was not unintentional. The German High Command understood the importance of commander/ chief of staff compatibility and attempted to maximize strong relationships. In Section III we will examine our own chief of staff system to see if we can maximize it also.

Section III

INTRODUCTION

In the preceding sections we examined two systems of selection, education, training, and advancement for operational level chiefs of staff. It is the intent of this section to formulate improvements for our own system.

DOCTRINE

Although current doctrine seems fully adequate for peacetime functions of the chief of staff, it may prove inadequate for war. Current doctrine neither gives the operational chief of staff the required authority to execute his anticipated wartime functions, nor specifies the operational actions this individual must formulate and supervise. The doctrine is restrictive in nature and should be expanded. Major General Sullivan elaborated on the complex nature of future operational level war -- a complicated arena which may require the chief of staff to be vested with assistant commander responsibilities as well as traditional staff supervisory roles. The chief of staff should be able to make decisions in the absence of the commander. He should be given the authority to translate the commander's decision into command and staff guidance, alert the command, and issue preparation orders in the commander's name.

Although the Prussian/German doctrine of co-responsibility would not be appropriate for the U.S. system, its application concerning both the transmission of orders and ensuing feedback through both command and chief of staff channels should be examined. Doctrinally the chief of staff's role should be made permissive, in the vein of a deputy commander, and not limited to the current role.

Finally, the nine operational functions, expressed by Major General Sullivan, clearly describe requirements for successful operational commanders and chiefs of staff. These functions should be considered for inclusion in future operational and leadership doctrine.

YOUTH

The German experience in World War II provides strong evidence that youthful senior staff officers can function efficiently in war. This comparison fully supports recent U.S. Army initiatives to promote qualified officers early, and elevate them to levels of increased responsibility. Despite the fact that many German army group chiefs of staff were many years junior to corps, army, and army group commanders, they functioned efficiently. U.S. operational level commanders and chiefs of staff would seem to be able to enjoy this same relationship should the defense establishment continue to emphasize promotions of younger officers.

SELECTION

The U.S. Armed Forces do not have a complete mechanism for selecting operational level chiefs of staff. The current personnel management system does nominate excellent officers for the positions, but operational commanders should have significant input concerning selection. Many armies have adopted this procedure including our own in World War II. If the primary requirement for the chief of staff is that he must complement the commander, then this input is essential. In joint headquarters determination of senior positions is often based on service allocations rather than the primary wishes of the CINC.

[65]

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The German General Staff system demonstrated that tough, demanding, officer education produced results. U.S Army officer education seems often to be aimed at pushing as many officers through each level as possible, with concerns for demanding performance often an afterthought. For instance, plans for upgrading the Command and General Staff College seem to center more on increasing attendance rather than focusing on curriculum improvement. Current U.S. Armed Forces officer education could be made demanding, perhaps incorporating objective testing in addition to subjective selection procedures. Additionally, perhaps we should institute a system to

rigorously select and educate a track of officers specifically for significant staff assignments. The School of Advanced Military Studies could serve as a good base on which to build an education system, but should be linked to joint requirements.

The U.S. Army has an excellent pre-commanders' course for incoming battalion and higher level commanders. The German Army implemented a similar system during the war but included corps chiefs of staff. Perhaps we should establish a similar "short course" for future chiefs of staff at all levels, thus creating working relationships and standardized procedures.

JOINT EXPERIENCE

The German Army General Staff system was not particularly strong in fostering officers with a comprehensive understanding of joint service operations. Each branch had a separate General Staff, with officers often detached from their parent service to augment other staffs. This system did not produce officers well versed in the intricacies of joint warfare. The U.S. system allows many different branch officers to participate together in both education and assignments. Although our joint education system may need fine tuning, it is a quantum leap from the German experience.

CHIEF OF STAFF ADVANCEMENT

Finally, the Army should re-look the "command track" system. Many of the German Army Group chiefs of staff, brigadier and major generals, had not commanded above the company level and yet were fully competent. Some of our own general officers in World War II did not command battalions and regiments prior to making significant contributions as senior leaders. Under our current system, many of these men would never have risen to these positions.

Do we really need a system of officer advancement tied this closely to command positions? The "command track" system produces good commanders but takes up significant portions of an officer's career. For those individuals who will command at higher levels this is an excellent preparatory system. At least in the German experience, however, future contributions by a General Staff officer were not solely linked to command at each level. We may be following a "command track" system based more on a traditional viewpoint than on current and future requirements. The chief of staff at both the tactical and operational level is also an important element for success and should be tailored for excellence in a special selection, education, and advancement program.

ENDNOTES

[1] Interview with several unified command chiefs of staff during the School of Advanced Military Studies trips to selected headquarters, Winter 1989.

[2] U.S. Army, FM 100-5, Operations. Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington, D.C. 1987, pp.175-176.

[3] John M. Vermillion. The Main Pillars of Generalship: A Different View. School of Advance Military Studies Monograph, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 1986, pp. 7-8.

[4] Ibid. The author quoted this passage from Gordon Craig, The Politics of the Prussian Army.

[5] Bernard L. Montgomery. The Memoirs of Field-Marshal The Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, K.G. New York: The World Publishing Company, 1958, pp. 89-91.

[6] John M. Vermillion, Pillars, pp. 7-8.

[7] Larry I. Bland. "George C. Marshall and the Education of Army Leaders", Military Review, October 1988, vol LXVIII (No 10) p. 36.

[8] National Defense University, Armed Forces Staff College Pub 1, The Joint Staff Officer's Guide 1988, Armed Forces Staff College, Norfolk, Virginia, 1988, p. 71.

[9] Ibid., p. 61.

[10] Chief of staff guidelines came from the following sources:

U.S. Army, FM 101-5, Staff Organizations and Operations. Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington, D.C. 1984, p.2-3.

U.S. Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC), RB 101-5, Staff Organization and Operations. CGSC, Fort Leavenworth Kansas. 1983, p.3-1.

[11] Richard F. Vaughn. Staff Control and the Chief of Staff's Challenge in an Operational Level Headquarters. School of Advance Military Studies Monograph, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 1988, p.21

[12] Ibid., pp. 30-37.

[13] Ibid., p.13.

- [14] Gregory C. Gardner. Generalship in War: The Principles of Operational Command. School of Advance Military Studies Monograph, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 1987, p. 1.
- [15] Ibid., pp. 1-2.
- [16] Ibid., pp. 20-22.
- [17] Gordon R. Sullivan. "Learning to Decide at the Operational Level of War", Military Review, October 1987, vol LXVII (No 10) p. 17.
- [18] Ibid., pp. 17-18.
- [19] Omar N. Bradley and Clay Blair. A General's Life, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983, pp. 111-112, 154-155, 212.
- [20] Richard F. Vaughn. Staff Control , p. 37.
- [21] John M. Vermillion. The Main Pillars of Generalship: A Different View. School of Advance Military Studies Monograph, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 1986, p. 33.
- [22] Michael D. Heredia. First Contact: Peacetime Planning Versus the Realities of Combat, the Need for an Operational Mechanism. School of Advance Military Studies Monograph, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 1988, p. 29.
- [23] Gordon R. Sullivan, "Learning", p. 17.
- [24] Ibid., pp. 29-31.
- [25] Gordon R. Sullivan. "Learning to Decide", pp. 19-23.
- [26] Interview with several unified command chiefs of staff during the School of Advanced Military Studies trips to selected headquarters, Winter 1989.
- [27] Trevor N. Dupuy, "The Current Implications of German Military Excellence", Strategic Review, vol IV, no 4, 1976, p. 87.
- [28] Born in 1800, the son of a Prussian Army Officer, von Moltke began military service in the Danish Royal Cadet Corps before entering the Prussian Army in 1823. He was accepted to the General Staff and served as a young officer both in Prussian and on two foreign tours to Turkey and Rome. A highly talented officer, he was made acting Chief of the General Staff in 1857. He held this position until 1888 and was instrumental in the Prussian victories over Austria in 1866 and France in 1870. (T.N. Dupuy, A Genius for War - The German Army and General Staff, 1807 - 1945, [Engelwood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall], 1977, pp. 61-65, 124.)

[29] Dr. Dan Hughes, Historian to the United States Army Command and General Staff College, lecture - "The German Officer Corps", (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas), 22 November 1988.

[30] Trevor N. Dupuy, "Current Implications", p. 91.

[31] Trevor N. Dupuy, The German General Staff. Institution of Demonstrated Excellence for National Command, Planning, Coordination, and Combat Performance. (Dunn Loring, VA.: Historical Evaluation and Research Organization), 1984, p.6.

[32] Franz Halder, "Control of the German Army General Staff", U.S. Army Historical Division Study MS# P-04ld, (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History), 1952, p.3.

[33] Other than failing to pass the original Military District examination. Such failure would block future promotion to captain during the Reichswehr era. C.A. Leader III, "The Kriegsakademie: Synthesizer of Clauswitzian Theory and Practice". 30 July 1982, pp. 44-45.

[34] Ibid., pp. 44-46.

[35] Trevor N. Dupuy, "Current Implications", p. 92.

[36] C.A. Leader III, "Kriegsakademie". p. 10.

[37] Ibid., pp. 51-52.

[38] Ibid., pp. 21, 53, 59, and Figure 3.

[39] Martin van Creveld, Fighting Power, German Military Performance, 1914-1945, (Potomac, Maryland: C&L Defense Consultants), 1980, p.55.

Some other General Staff positions are as follows:

Command Level	Position	Abbreviation
Division	Operations Officer	Ia
Division	Intelligence Officer	Ic
Division	Supply and Administration Officer	Ib
Corps	Chief of Staff	
Corps	Operations Officer	Ia
Corps	Intelligence Officer	Ic
Corps	Supply and Administration Officer	Qu
Army	Chief of Staff	

Army	Operations Officer	Ia
Army	Assistant Operations Officer	Id
Army	Intelligence Officer	Ic
Army	Chief Supply and Administration Officer	Qu
Army	First Deputy to Chief Supply and Administration Officer	Qu1
Army	Second Deputy to Chief Supply and Administration Officer	Qu2
Army (Attached)	Transportation Officer	
Army (Attached)	Air Force Operations Officer	
Army Group	Chief of Staff	
Army Group	Operations Officer	Ia
Army Group	Assistant Operations Officer	Id
Army Group	Intelligence Officer	Ic
Army Group	Chief Supply and Administration Officer	Qu
Army Group	First Deputy to Chief Supply and Administration Officer	Qu1
Army Group	Second Deputy to Chief Supply and Administration Officer	Qu2
Army Group (Attached)	Transportation Officer	
Army Group (Attached)	Air Force Operations Officer	

[40] Richard Brett-Smith, Hitler's Generals, (San Rafael, California: Presidio Press), 1977, p.13.

[41] Bronsart von Schellendorf, The Duties of the General Staff (Volume 1), (London: C. Kegan Paul & Company), 1877, p.160.

[42] C.A. Leader III, "Kriegsakademie". pp. 17-18.

[43] J.F.C. Fuller, Generalship Its Diseases and Their Cure: A Study of the Personal Factor in Command, (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Military Service Publishing Co.), 1936, p.70.

[44] Multiple pages from the following sources:

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Erwin Lenfeld and Franz Thomas, Die Eichenlaubtraeger 1940-1945, (Wiener-Neustadt: Oesterreich), 1982.

Oberkommando des Heeres, "Handliste der Generalstabsoffiziere", (Berlin: H.P.A. [P3] [Ia,Ib,II]), 1944.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Jost W. Schneider, Their Honor was Loyalty, (San Jose, California: R. James Bender Publishing), 1977, pp. 213-214, 261-262.

[49] C.A. Leader III, "Kriegsakademie". p. 8.

[50] Multiple pages from Wolf Keilig, Die Generale, Erwin Lenfeld and Franz Thomas, Die Eichenlaubtraeger, and Oberkommando des Heeres, "Handliste der Generalstabsoffiziere".

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid.

[56] For an overview of German general officer casualties in World War II see: French L. MacLean, German General Officer Casualties in World War II -- Harbinger for U.S. Army General Officer Casualties in AirLand Battle?, School of Advanced Military Studies, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 1988.

[57] Rudolf Hofmann, "German Efficiency Report System", U.S. Army Historical Division Study MS# P-134, (Washington, D.C: Office of the Chief of Military History), 1952, p.3.

[58] Martin van Creveld, Fighting Power, p. 166.

[59] Helmut Kleinkamp, "The Army Personnel Office", U.S. Army Historical Division Study MS# P-041hh, (Washington, D.C: Office of the Chief of Military History), 1952, p.21.

[60] Rudolf Hofmann, "German Efficiency Report System", p.36.

[61] Oberkommando des Heeres, Heerespersonalamt, Amtsgruppe P3, Roll 48, Item H8/7, Series T-78, Records of Headquarters German Army High Command Microfilm, (Washington, D.C: The National Archives), 1961.

[62] Research for this paper does not include any analysis of possible officer efficiency report inflation in the system, nor does it include a comparison of General Staff officer reports with regular line officer efficiency reports.

[63] Franz Halder, The Halder Diaries: The Private War Journals of Colonel General Franz Halder, (Boulder, Colorado: T.N. Dupuy Associates and Westview Press), 2 vols, 1976.

[64] F.W. von Mellenthin, Panzer Battles, (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press), 1971, p. 311.

[65] Interview with several unified command chiefs of staff during the School of Advanced Military Studies trips to selected headquarters, Winter 1989.

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